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manner of eating is its speed and almost complete lack of ceremony. It is true that there is a certain amount of etiquette prescribed before the meal is actually started. Invitations must be issued respectfully for instance, and water brought to wash the hands of the guests. But once the company, whether of men or women, is gathered, there is no further delay. The five or six eaters squat round the vessels of food, and bolt the meal silently and swiftly. Lumps of porridge are torn off and swallowed apparently almost whole, and two or three pounds of *ubwali* disappears in as many moments. The eaters rise, turn on their heels and leave. Plenty of food is the *sine qua non* of gaiety and social activity in Bemba society, but eating itself is never considered a recreation. Meals are not times for rest, or chat, or merriment. In fact, it might be said there was almost something furtive about the group of eaters bowed over a porridge basket, and it is considered rude to address or to look at anyone during their meal. It would be equivalent to asking for a share.

These customs, which obviously affect the digestive habits of the people, are directly correlated with their material culture. Bemba who share food sit round one basket, and each tears off porridge from one lump. In these circumstances it is impossible to linger. While the man who eats faster than his fellows causes resentment, the one who eats too slowly goes hungry. For an eater to pause to tell an anecdote, as we might do, secure in possession of our own plate, would be fatal. It must be remembered, too, that Bemba houses have only one room, in or near which the women eat. Men take their meals in the full publicity of the whole village, hence there is a certain amount of hurry and shame attached. People do not like to eat when others are not doing so.

The usual meal of porridge and relish is served hot, but the temperature does not seem to be a matter of great importance to the natives. If the men are late, their porridge stands about gradually chilling, and is not put back to keep hot on the fire. Natives will eat lumps of cold porridge left over from the night before, and small pieces are carried while travelling. Water is not often drunk with meals, for fear it should make the porridge swell. A man may wash out his mouth with water before eating—*ukufumya malima*—'to remove the stickiness of the night', or he may drink after specially good food that has 'left itself in the throat'. He will only drink during a meal with a bitter food that 'makes our mouths

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dry as if there wasn't any saliva in them'.[1] It is very important to natives to get the right proportion of relish to porridge. Every one wants to get as much relish as possible, and here the rules of procedure are fixed. An old man may tear off a lump of *ubwali* and make it into a hollow spoon. This he will dip into the liquid relish and then pick up as much relish as possible (*ukuleme nkondwa*). The child, or inferior, may only just dip the porridge into the relish to moisten it (*ukutumpika*), and thus the proportion of vegetable varies very much according to age. A young man will not dare *ukuleme nkondwa* until he is given the permission by his father, said to be granted when the boy is able to do a full day's work in the gardens. A girl should wait the invitation of her mother before trying to take an adult portion of relish, and on the few occasions when a wife eats with her husband, in the privacy of their hut at night, she is supposed merely to dip her porridge in the stew like a child, until she reaches middle or old age when, among the Bemba. all sex disabilities seem to disappear.

Bemba eating customs can therefore be said to differ considerably from our own, both as regards the rhythm of meals, the regularity of daily intake, and the serving and rate of consumption, but in each case the manner of eating is just as precisely defined by cultural rule and related as strictly to the general economic system and social grouping of the people concerned. Even the proportion of liquid to solid, or relish to porridge, is prescribed by etiquette.

Beer Drinking.

Bemba beer (*ubwalua*) is one of their most important foodstuffs. It is made from the staple cereal itself.[2] It is a valuable source of vitamin B in which the diet is otherwise deficient.[3] On the day when it is drunk very few natives eat any other form of food, and some individuals, mostly chiefs, subsist on it entirely from day to day. But *ubwalua* is far more than a mere food. It is the people's only kind of entertainment, the chief break in the monotony of

[1] Information collected by Mrs. Gore-Browne.

[2] The Bantu peoples make beer from a number of different sources according to their environment, eleusine, Kaffir-corn, maize, cassava, bananas, honey, and. in the Congo. wine from palms and sugar-cane. The Bemba preference for millet beer is shared by a number of people such as the Bisa (of the swamps), or the Venda of the Transvaal (H. Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p. 35) who grow the cereal specially for the purpose.

[3] Kaffir beer is included as part of the rations issued to mine-workers on the Rand scale chiefly for this reason.

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Water must also be fetched from the stream morning and evening (*ukutapa menshi*). A good housewife always has one or two *inongo* full of water standing to cool in her hut, and has warm water ready in the early morning for her husband to wash in, and for the baby's bath. No man ever draws for himself under village conditions, and the fetching of water is reckoned one of the essential duties of a wife.[1] The provision of drinking water for her husband is equally a woman's duty, and at a chief's court where old-fashioned ceremony is still observed, his wives kneel to offer him water in a gourd.

Besides collecting wood and water the woman has to provide relish, and this takes up much of her time at certain seasons of the year. During the rainy months regular expeditions are made daily to look for mushrooms. Women and girls go out with carrying baskets and line up across the bush, each picking what she finds. Such an expedition might take two or three hours. Wild spinaches have also to be looked for, and in the hot weather the girls are sent to gather *icikanda* orchids which grow in certain spots known to the natives, or the different wild fruits. Even when garden vegetables are available it may be necessary to walk two or three miles to a distant field to pick them. This is specially so when the gourds and pumpkins ripen, and it is reckoned that every other day the housewife must go out to her gardens to pick them (*ukusaba*) as they reach their prime. All these accessory activities have somehow to be fitted into the day besides the regular gardening and cooking.

The main processes of porridge making and cooking relish are themselves lengthy. The average time taken by seven women to thresh, winnow, and grind flour was 7·4 minutes a pound, and since about six pounds would be used daily by an ordinary family the time taken would be about three-quarters of an hour.[2] These women were, however, working uninterruptedly and knew they were being timed. An hour would be a more likely time under normal conditions. Different relishes take half to three-quarters

[1] A middle-aged widower and widow were discussing the possibility of marriage prosaically together. The would-be bridegroom said, 'Are you the kind of woman who always has hot water ready for her husband in the morning, and never grumbles when he asks for more?' The prospective bride answered, 'Yes, that is what I do. But are you the kind of man who gives his wife a new cloth occasionally and doesn't spend his money all on himself?'

[2] For note [2] see next page.